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Substantive session of 2003

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING (FIRST PART)*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 1 July 2003, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. ROSENTHAL	(Guatemala)
later:	Mr. HUSSEIN (Vice-President)	(Ethiopia)

CONTENTS

PROMOTING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued)

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* The summary record of the second part of the meeting appears as document E/2003/SR.16/Add.1

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

PROMOTING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/2003/33 and 51; E/2003/NGO/1)

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan) thanked the Secretary-General for his excellent report (E/2003/51), which contained useful suggestions concerning the work of the Council. He supported the Secretary-General's view that accelerated rural development was crucial to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. A rural development strategy could be successful only if adequate resources were allocated to its implementation, and partnerships between developing and developed countries were of paramount importance in that regard. While developing country Governments were free to decide on their budget allocations, the structural adjustment programmes imposed on them and constraints related to budget deficits certainly placed certain restrictions on their decisions. That circumstance illustrated developed countries' influence on rural development. First of all, they must allow developing countries to devote sufficient resources to that process. Secondly, while the donor countries themselves decided on the amount of official development assistance (ODA) that they disbursed to the developing countries, the poverty reduction programmes in the receiving countries determined the exact portion to be allocated for rural development; hence the need for a partnership-based approach to enable the parties to come to an agreement on the use to which the funds were put. Thirdly, trade exerted a considerable influence on rural development, and inequitable terms of trade had been a serious obstacle to rural development in developing countries. At the national level, many developing countries had redirected a substantial part of their budgetary allocations for agriculture towards the industrial sector, thereby worsening rural underdevelopment. An international trading system that penalized agricultural production in developing countries further exacerbated the problem. The Agreement on Agriculture concluded at the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations had proved unfavourable to developing countries as it effectively legitimized the trade-distorting practices of developed countries, including the granting of agricultural subsidies to farmers in the rich countries and the imposition of significantly higher tariffs on agricultural products than those imposed on other products. In the context of declining terms of trade, developing countries had been forced to resort to intensive production of one or two commodities to maintain their export revenues, to the

detriment of their environment and sustainable development. In addition, developing countries had been compelled to eliminate tariff barriers for agricultural imports and substantially reduce agricultural subsidies.

Vulnerable developing countries such as Pakistan, which had seen exports stagnate and rural poverty worsen during the past decade as a result of drastic falls in cotton prices, wished to see the Agreement on Agriculture reviewed with a view to ensuring equitable conditions and guaranteeing food security. Within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) agriculture negotiations, developing countries had proposed a series of measures to create safeguards against unfair competition, but thus far their suggestions had fallen on deaf ears. While agriculture in developed countries was based on large-scale production, agricultural activities in developing countries were environmentally sustainable and generated employment; however, the survival of that model depended on the establishment of regulations that took specific account of those countries' needs. In that connection, food commodities produced in developing countries should be excluded from tariff reductions to protect small-scale farmers from competition by low-cost imports.

Mr. LEGESSE (Ethiopia) welcomed the efforts made by the United Nations over the past decade to secure the adoption of international development goals, and, in particular, those set forth in the Millennium Declaration. The time had come for the international community to achieve those goals, including halving poverty, guaranteeing universal access to health care and education, water and sanitation, reducing maternal and child mortality rates and protecting the environment. In Ethiopia's view, the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the texts adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg had shed some light on ways of translating those commitments into concrete action.

The topic chosen by the Economic and Social Council for its High-level Segment had a particular significance for Ethiopia, 85 per cent of whose population depended on agriculture for its livelihood, and which for that reason had drawn up global development strategies with a strong focus on rural and agricultural development. Ethiopia envisaged establishing a market economy that would enable it to free itself from its dependence on food aid and to achieve rapid growth, the prime beneficiaries of which would be the poor.

Ethiopia's sustainable development and poverty reduction strategy had four main pillars: industrialization based on agricultural development; reform of the justice system and civil service; decentralization and empowerment; and capacity-building in the public and private sectors.

The aim of the first pillar was to boost productivity and agricultural income through measures such as increased access to modern farming technology; improving the coverage of microfinance institutions; expansion of vocational training for extension workers; and further development of agricultural research, water harvesting techniques and small-scale irrigation. With regard to fiscal policy, Ethiopia had decided to invest more in agriculture, particularly in the areas of food security, natural resources, education, health care and road construction.

Ethiopia could not, however, achieve its national targets without external support, and it hoped that during the current session the international community would reverse the downward trend in ODA to the least developed countries (LDCs), and give particular attention to developing countries' hard-hit agricultural sectors. Debt relief measures for the highly indebted poor countries should also be linked to their ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Trade was one of the key sources of economic growth and social development. Accordingly, in line with the commitments made by the international community under the Doha Development Round, trade in agriculture needed to be liberalized and LDCs' effective participation in the multilateral trading system increased. Those countries relied on a small number of primary commodities for their export earnings, a situation which left them exposed to the whims of international price fluctuations. The dramatic decline in international coffee prices during the previous three years had had serious consequences for Ethiopia's rural poor and was compromising the implementation of the country's development strategy. While the long-term solution to the problem clearly lay in horizontal and vertical diversification, the international community could take various short- and medium-term measures, such as stabilizing commodity prices, eliminating tariff barriers to trade, removing tariff peaks and escalations for value-added products and assisting LDCs in addressing supply constraints.

Mr. BÅGE (International Fund for Agricultural Development - IFAD) noted with satisfaction that, after years of neglect, agriculture and rural development were again attracting attention.

When IFAD had been established, the global food deficit had been the mobilizing force for action. Now that some farmers in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) area received subsidies not to produce, the challenge was a different one. However, despite the abundance of food, poverty and hunger were rampant in many parts of the world, and the struggle was now one for equity and human dignity.

A global consensus must be reached on the task that lay ahead. The adoption by the international community of the United Nations Millennium Declaration with its commitment to halving poverty and hunger by the year 2015 was a first step in the right direction. The next priority was action to combat rural poverty. In most poor countries, agriculture was the main economic sector, the largest employer and the biggest export earner. History had shown that reforms in the agricultural sector had often caused the economy as a whole to take off and created a virtuous circle of development. Lastly - and that had still to be achieved - Governments and donors must recognize the full importance of increasing the productivity of small farmers who were tomorrow's producers and consumers, and must realize that investment for that purpose was in their own best interest.

In reality, however, the share of ODA allocated to rural development had diminished continuously over recent years. That trend had to be reversed if the Millennium Development Goals were to be achieved.

IFAD's experience had shown that key factors in rural development were access to natural resources, in particular land and water; to domestic, regional and global markets; to financial resources, in particular microfinance, the effectiveness of which was proven; to technology and research; and to accountable and non-corrupt institutions that were in a position to represent the interests of the rural poor.

All those needs could be met only if developing country Governments were urged to make agriculture central to national development and if OECD member countries reversed the decline in ODA funding for agriculture. Fortunately, there was already evidence of such a trend.

The current High-level Segment debate could mark a turning point so long as it led to an increased understanding of the importance of agriculture and rural development for poverty reduction; a firmer commitment to increased funding for rural development; and the establishment of a mechanism to monitor the implementation of those commitments.

Mr. LEVIN (International Telecommunication Union - ITU) said that ITU sought to contribute to the development of rural and remote areas through an integrated approach that took account of the new dimension added by information and communication technology. A declaration would be adopted at the World Summit on the Information Society to be convened at the end of 2003 on the important role of those technologies in achieving development goals and narrowing the digital divide. Access to those technologies in rural and remote areas substantially improved the provision of socio-economic and cultural services, as was confirmed by numerous examples, such as the installation of rural telecommunications in Sri Lanka, which had expedited decision-making by farmers and significantly reduced their production costs.

ITU had worked towards those goals for over a decade and, in 1994, had adopted an integrated rural development programme. At the second World Telecommunication Development Conference in Malta in 1998, it had launched a new programme to promote universal access to basic telecommunications, broadcasting services and the Internet. ITU continued to contribute to pilot projects for the establishment of multi-purpose community telecommunications centres in rural areas based on best practice and suitable technologies and taking account of the specific socio-cultural and geographic conditions of each region.

Mr. GÓMEZ LACAYO (Nicaragua) said that, although progress had been made at the national level in improving the mobilization of resources, substantial reforms were called for at the international level to strengthen the effectiveness of cooperation for development. Economic and financial constraints restricted the flow of resources for cooperation: the global recession that had not spared the small countries and the conditions imposed by the financial institutions for the granting of development funds were of particular concern. Nicaragua was encountering even greater difficulties in the field of sustainable development: within the framework of strategies for economic growth and poverty reduction, resources were primarily

allocated to the development of human capital and the protection of vulnerable groups, while overall growth and good governance, which were crucial to the achievement of those two goals, were often neglected. Nonetheless, financial cooperation alone was insufficient. An equitable trade regime involving an opening up of developed country markets was indispensable to development.

Mr. PALECKIS (Observer for Lithuania) said that, in spite of rapid economic growth and favourable conditions for agricultural development, rural poverty remained a cause for concern in Lithuania. Many small farmers were badly equipped, ill-prepared to meet the challenges posed by competitive market conditions, and unused to cooperation. The Government had adopted a poverty reduction strategy paper and established a poverty monitoring commission. In addition, it had taken a series of measures to support small- and medium-sized enterprises, to improve vocational training for farmers and to encourage the diversification of the rural economy.

Lithuania which would shortly be a member State of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), could serve as a link between the European Union and its neighbouring Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. Lithuania cooperated actively with a number of the CIS countries and had proposed Vilnius to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a possible location for a regional centre for development cooperation. The Government was planning to initially cooperate with the Nordic States, in the gradual establishment of poverty eradication programmes for LDCs, a completely new challenge for Lithuania. It was hoped that its experience of economic transition, regional cooperation, rural development and poverty reduction would be of value to other countries.

Mr. MELNIK (Ukraine) said that in making rural development a theme of its High-level Segment, the Economic and Social Council had demonstrated its interest in a major issue that had been too long ignored. The transitional economies' experience in that sphere highlighted the importance of decisive State action to combat rural poverty. Since regaining independence, Ukraine had worked resolutely to restore its agricultural capacity. One important measure in that regard had been a strengthening of the legal status of freeholders and the protection of their rights, inter alia, through the adoption of a Land Code. A presidential decree had been issued in 2000 aimed at expediting agricultural reform. Over 70 per cent of agricultural

land had been privatized. Efforts were currently under way to establish a system of optimal land use; to relieve the debt burden; to foster an entrepreneurial spirit; to raise the standard of living for the rural population; and to combat the black economy. Agricultural production had been raised through assistance for domestic producers and an increase in agricultural loans to nearly US$ 1 billion in 2002.

Ukraine's and other States' accession to WTO would facilitate the development of trade and investment in those countries. Ukraine's experience regarding the environmental aspects of rural development showed that legal, administrative and economic measures needed to be taken to preserve the environment and conserve and restore natural resources. Over the years, thousands of young people from developing countries had received expert training in agricultural techniques in Ukraine, which was keen to strengthen its cooperation in that field. Lastly, Ukraine, which was commemorating the terrible famine of 1932 and 1933, which had been deliberately brought about by the totalitarian regime of the time and had caused more than 7 million deaths, was particularly conscious of the tragic consequences of famine, especially when it was man-made. It called on the international community to join in efforts to prevent any recurrence of such disasters.

Mr. MOYO (Zimbabwe) said that in order to reduce poverty in the rural areas in which 70 per cent of the Zimbabwean population lived, his Government had adopted rural development strategies, the main objectives of which were macroeconomic stabilization, employment generation, social protection and food security. The Government was continuing to empower rural institutions, such as rural district councils, and was encouraging rural communities to engage in viable income-generating activities. It would soon embark on the formulation of a national poverty reduction strategy, with a particular focus on drought relief, public works and community action programmes and basic education. In the agriculture sector, the Government had implemented an Agricultural Policy Framework (1995-2020) and a Poverty Alleviation Action Plan (1999), which had contributed significantly to improving food security.

The second phase of the Land Reform Programme had begun in July 2000. Most rural people now had access to land and the Government was seeking to increase agricultural productivity through, inter alia, irrigation and mechanization programmes and provision of resources for production. Accordingly, it was cooperating with agencies such as the

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in that endeavour. It was also implementing an Integrated Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme, and a Rural Electrification Programme. Recognizing the vital role that women played in rural societies, the Government was committed to creating an enabling environment for women and facilitating their access to financing for income-generating projects. It had also set up a National AIDS Council with a decentralized structure that reached down to the village level. HIV/AIDS had a catastrophic effect on food production and food security, and enhanced international cooperation was needed to fight the pandemic.

Rural development and poverty eradication were contingent on a favourable global economic environment, including the elimination of trade barriers. It was to be hoped that the WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancún (Mexico) would see progress in that respect. It was also important to reverse the downward trend in ODA and foreign direct investment and to promote debt relief.

Mr. MONTADOR (Canadian International Development Agency), noting that it was important for developing countries themselves to manage their development strategies, said that Canada was keen to cooperate with countries that were committed to reducing poverty and respecting the principles of democracy and good governance. At the 2002 G-8 summit held in Kananaskis (Canada), his Government had reiterated its commitment to an agricultural model that fostered sustainable rural development. It had undertaken to increase ODA contributions by 8 per cent annually until 2010 and had pledged US$ 6 billion in ODA for the period 2002-2007. His organization had decided to increase its agricultural investment fivefold compared with 2002-2003 levels over the next five years.

Agriculture was at the heart of rural development and closely linked to issues such as health, education, the private sector, water resource management, sanitation, the environment, decentralization and gender equality. In order for agriculture to fulfil its twofold role of reducing hunger and generating economic growth, measures needed to be taken to assist the most vulnerable groups of the population, while fostering economic growth. Canada was committed to a scientific approach to agriculture based on the latest technology, and in 2003 had therefore

doubled its support to the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, many of whose programmes were geared towards meeting the needs of small farmers. Intent on achieving the Doha objectives, Canada had eliminated tariffs and quotas on nearly all LDC imports as of 1 January 2003.

Much remained to be done to promote rural development. Rural areas most in need of assistance were often those that faced the greatest challenges: lack of infrastructure and rural services, isolation, weak social services, lack of human resources, degradation of natural resources, and political instability. His delegation looked forward to hearing other speakers' proposals on the best ways of contributing to sustainable rural development.

Mr. OMINO (Kenya) fully associated his delegation with the statement made by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Poverty in some developing countries had reached unacceptable levels, and the international community had a duty to promote rural development in poor countries, inter alia, by reversing the downward trend in aid flows, contributing to the World Solidarity Fund for poverty eradication, and reducing inequalities between rural and urban populations and between developing and developed countries. As poverty in developing countries was also a product of worsening terms of trade in agricultural products, the problem should be addressed by starting to implement the provisions of the Doha Development Agenda concluded under the auspices of WTO.

Kenya had launched an economic recovery programme to restore growth, create macro-economic stability, promote good governance and construct or rehabilitate infrastructure. Special measures were being taken to address the problems of arid and semi-arid districts, which accounted for 80 per cent of Kenya's territory, and whose populations were highly vulnerable to food insecurity. Limited access to renewable, affordable and reliable energy sources was one of the main obstacles to sustainable development. He therefore called upon the international community to assist the poor economies in overcoming the problem through measures including diversification of energy sources, mobilization of financial resources, capacity-building and appropriate technology transfer. The number of the world's poor was growing by 10 million each year in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and South Asia: a worrying trend and a serious threat to the human race as a whole. There was thus an urgent need for concerted action by the international community.

Mr. RICHELLE (Observer for the European Commission) said that rural development and food security were crucial to poverty reduction and, as such, were high on the agenda of the European Commission. Combating poverty successfully required a break with past policies that had totally neglected the rural areas in which most of the world's poor lived. Measures were needed to support a range of sectors that had a strong impact on rural economies, especially the agricultural sector. It was thus important to improve market access for developing countries' agricultural products and reduce trade-distorting farm subsidies. With those objectives in mind, the European Union ministers of agriculture had recently reached an agreement on a reform package for the common agricultural policy that included a substantial reduction in subsidies for European farmers. Subsequently, the Commission would propose further reforms that would affect crops that were of particular relevance to developing countries, such as cotton. The Commission urged other countries with trade-distorting policies to follow suit.

Active participation of the rural poor in devising the development strategies that affected them was important, and called for effective political and administrative decentralization. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, debt swaps, stakeholder dialogues and participatory planning were among the appropriate means of promoting rural development. However, it was important to remain realistic and recognize that, particularly in LDCs, armed conflict, a lack of basic infrastructure and the absence of good governance continued to present major obstacles to development and growth. Institutional capacity-building in those countries was therefore a priority. Without it, even the € 8 billion in ODA pledged by the European Union annually could not bring about more efficient and coherent strategies and programmes for rural development.

Mr. ULLERUP (Observer for Denmark) said that the promotion of rural development required a broad-based approach focusing on agricultural, social and trade-related questions. The three main objectives of such a strategy were to provide incentives for rural communities themselves to invest in the development of their production; to put in place the necessary infrastructure to increase production; and to encourage good governance and democracy. In order to reach those goals, it was essential to secure land-user rights and land tenure for both men and women and to ensure that farmers' agricultural income was sufficient to

enable them to plough back part of the surplus into rural development. Rich countries must phase out agricultural subsidies and open up their markets to products from developing countries. The European Union had set an example in that regard, but additional efforts were needed in the context of the Doha Development Round.

Education and water were two areas in which modernization of infrastructures was important to rural development. Accordingly, Denmark would increase the share of its development assistance allocated to investment in human resources, especially education, health, safe drinking water and sanitation. Good governance and democracy were essential for rural development, since they enhanced the participation of rural populations in decision-making processes and provided a platform for their voices to be heard. If the international community was committed to halving poverty by 2015 as part of the Millennium Development Goals, donors needed to prioritize rural development and the States concerned needed to put in place policies and services to facilitate investment in rural areas.

Ms. MILLAR (Australia) said that income generation for the rural poor must be at the heart of any rural development strategy. Her Government had therefore recently adopted a strategy for rural development that focused on increasing agricultural sector productivity, stimulating rural non-farm employment, and the sustainable management of natural resources. The adoption of that strategy was premised on three main observations, namely: that rural development policies needed to be tailored to the specific conditions of the respective beneficiary countries; that sustainable rural development required good governance; and that developing countries could not trade their way out of poverty while developed country markets remained closed to them. In 2002, her Government had allocated $A 310 million in direct and indirect aid for rural development projects. It urged all countries to use the Doha Round of trade negotiations as an opportunity to open their markets by making genuine efforts to reduce agricultural subsidies and eliminate trade barriers to developing countries.

Mr. FUST (Observer for Switzerland) said that good management of natural resources, especially of land and water, was of paramount importance to development and poverty reduction in rural areas. In addition, local communities' knowledge of the utilization and preservation of natural resources needed to be taken into account and exploited. The fight against HIV/AIDS was also crucial: the pandemic had a detrimental effect on human

development, transfer of know-how, community life, agricultural production and solidarity networks, perpetuating the vicious cycle of poverty and food insecurity. In the context of human resource development and knowledge sharing, information and communication technology were important new instruments in the fight against the causes of poverty. Switzerland was firmly committed to increased knowledge sharing in the field of development. As a party to the Global Knowledge Partnership, it would host the first part of the World Summit on the Information Society in December 2003. In making that commitment, it intended to give poor people and marginalized groups increased access to information and to provide them with a platform to make their voices heard, exchange views, establish networks and, above all, become protagonists in their own development. He was convinced that the world possessed the necessary knowledge and resources to eradicate poverty and hunger. Henceforth, it was a question of mobilizing the political will to take the concerted action needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. NEGROPONTE (United States of America) said that increasing agricultural productivity must be given high priority in the regions most affected by poverty and malnutrition, as an indispensable prerequisite for sustainable development. Increased agricultural productivity simultaneously enhanced food security, improved nutrition and made additional resources available for other necessities. Six components were indispensable to such a process.

First, it was important to establish supportive policy frameworks based on sound policies, good governance and promotion of economic freedom. Secondly, agricultural production techniques must be based on scientific and technological progress. Support for research and extension, including biotechnology research, would result in virus-resistant crops that produced higher yields. It was regrettable that certain Governments, motivated by fears that lacked any scientific basis, blocked the import of biotech crops, thus deterring other countries from investing in biotechnology. Thirdly, it was important to expand developing country farmers' commercial opportunities in domestic and international markets. The United States remained committed to the objectives set forth in the Doha Development Agenda: substantially improved market access, gradual reduction and eventual phasing out of all forms of export subsidies, and substantial reduction in trade-distorting domestic subsidies. It had put forward an ambitious proposal concerning those three areas, and believed that other partners needed to be similarly

ambitious. Fourthly, land tenure regimes needed to be reformed and small producers - who were often women - should be granted easier access to microcredit. Fifthly, human capital needed enhancing though investment in education, health - especially mother and child health - nutrition programmes and family planning services. Lastly, immediate relief must be provided for vulnerable groups, while concurrently eliminating the root causes of their vulnerability.

In line with those overall objectives, the United States would undertake an initiative to end hunger in Africa. The goal was to double the production of basic food crops that constituted the staple diet of the local population in key countries and regions and to increase family incomes by broadening access to new technology and markets.

Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil) said that his Government's far-reaching "Zero Hunger" programme to combat poverty and hunger encompassed over 100 initiatives covering structural policies such as job creation and income generation, progress on agricultural reform, and support for family-scale farming; specific assistance such as the daily distribution of 32 million free school meals; and various local and regional policies. In addition, the Government had launched a programme to combat drought providing, inter alia, for special credit facilities for rural women. The "Zero Hunger" initiative was already starting to bear fruit. It had been expanded to cover 190 communities in the semi-arid region, which was one of the country's poorest, and would eventually reach out to more than 1,000 communities.

Progress at the national level would not, however, be sufficient to eradicate poverty without decisive and concerted efforts on the part of the international community to create an enabling environment. Unfortunately, efforts made at the international level lacked coherence, as was illustrated by the conflicting policies regarding official development assistance and trade. In spite of the lip service paid to trade liberalization, protectionist measures persisted and the Doha process was at a standstill. It was to be hoped that the WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancún would contribute to progress in the area of agricultural negotiations.

The creation of the World Solidarity Fund for poverty eradication was an encouraging step, but the Fund was not yet operational. Brazil urged donor countries to contribute to it and was ready to collaborate with UNDP in strengthening the South-South cooperation dimension of the Fund.

Mr. NEIL (Jamaica) affirmed his country's commitment to the integrated approach to rural development advocated by the Secretary-General in his report. The creation of a supportive macro-economic environment at the national level needed to be paralleled by the establishment of an international trading system that provided satisfactory solutions to the problems of trade in agricultural goods and market access, trade barriers and fluctuations in commodity prices. The Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations was a first step in that direction, but much remained to be done if developing countries were to benefit fully from the opening up of the markets.

The main agricultural programmes implemented in Jamaica aimed at increasing productivity, both of domestic food production and of agricultural export crops. The programmes were based on the provision of concessionary financing through public sector development banks; the rehabilitation of the infrastructure necessary for agricultural production, such as feeder roads and irrigation; and assistance to support services, including marketing, research and extension services. Diversification of rural non-agricultural activities, strengthening of small and medium-sized enterprises, and the development of microcredit institutions were important elements of Jamaica's strategy. The results obtained in those areas were encouraging.

Economic growth in rural areas needed to go hand in hand with improved access to education, health care and social services. Accelerated rural development required a strengthening of land tenure rights, increased access to renewable energy sources, and the devising of innovative strategies to provide water resources to the poor.

Success in the eradication of poverty in rural areas was dependent on the establishment of an institutional framework that allowed for greater participation of the poor in decision-making processes, and on the creation of the necessary infrastructure to increase agricultural productivity. Against that background, ODA flows needed to be targeted towards the rural sector.

Mr. CHUNG Eui-yong (Republic of Korea) described in detail the rural development programme implemented in his country since the early 1970s, which had given a new boost to the rural economy and thus prevented mass migration to the cities. The

"New Village Movement" was based on grass-roots participation: each village had elected its own regional representative who had dealt directly with the public authorities in the design and implementation of rural development projects. The public authorities had been closely involved in the process through coordinating officials who ensured systematic on-site monitoring of the projects.

The Movement had shown the paramount importance of strengthening human resources: the training of regional representatives had been a key factor in making the campaign a success. Women had been elected to each village council. The gradual improvement of rural infrastructure and living conditions had lent considerable credibility to the Movement, while encouraging young people to remain in the villages and motivating local communities to gradually embark on more ambitious projects. Over 50 per cent of rural households in the Republic of Korea now had Internet access. Lastly, the Movement could not have been successful without the Government's willingness to allocate the necessary resources to it and the villagers' readiness to deposit their savings in banks to help fund the projects.

That approach and its results illustrated, and to some extent validated, the main recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report (E/2003/51). On the basis of its experience, the Republic of Korea was ready to participate in the international community's efforts to help developing countries, and in particular LDCs, in developing their rural communities. At present, a preferential regime was extended to a substantial number of LDC export products; a wider range of products would be included over time. His country was the fourth-largest importer of LDC products worldwide, accounting for 4.8 per cent of all LDC exports. In addition, in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, it had set up a number of programmes to assist developing countries. His Government was committed to continuing to expand its assistance and support to the extent that its resources permitted.

Mr. MIGLIORE (Observer for the Holy See) said that a global alliance for development should be established, with the principle of collective responsibility at its core. The objectives of such an alliance should be poverty eradication in rural areas and the implementation of an integrated strategy involving the implementation of a series of non-reciprocal economic and trade concessions by the richer countries. He advocated limiting

aid measures that afforded temporary relief but failed to stimulate local economies; encouraging practices that supported both sustainable development and increased productivity of family farms; and establishing equitable international trade rules that did not simply favour the interests of developed countries. The first step in that direction would be the elimination, or at least substantial reduction, of agricultural export subsidies.

Other important measures included encouraging public and private investment in the areas of primary and secondary education and primary health care, as well as investment to combat diseases that threatened the rural poor and malnutrition, and programmes to guarantee access to safe drinking water. Elimination of the root causes of regional armed conflict, which often targeted innocent rural civilians, was also a matter of priority.